DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 437 IR 011 669

TITLE Communicating with Pictures. P-8A.
INSTITUTION Peace Corps, Washington, DC. Information Collection and Exchange Div.; United Nations Children's Fund, Kathmandu (Nepal).
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Audiovisual Materials (100) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); Developing Nations; *Illustrations; *Instructional Materials; International Programs; Media Selection; *Nonprint Media; *Photographs; Visual Aids; *Visual Literacy
IDENTIFIERS *Nepal

ABSTRACT

In early 1976, the National Development Service of Nepal and UNICEF conducted a study designed to determine whether it would be possible to communicate ideas and information to Nepalese villagers who cannot read by using pictures only, the kinds of pictures that are most meaningful for villagers, and whether different colors have special meanings for villagers. Teams of data-collectors went to nine different parts of Nepal and conducted interviews with more than 400 adult villagers from the following groups: Thakuri, Brahmin, Chhetri, Muslim, Bhote, Magar, Gurung, Maithili, Limbu, Rai, and Tharu. None of the villagers interviewed had ever been to school. The researchers showed the villagers a variety of pictures and colors and noted their responses. The main findings of the study, and what they mean for National Development Service participants and other village development workers, are summarized in this booklet, which is also available in the Nepali language. Among the findings: villagers tend to "read" pictures very literally and do not expect to receive ideas from them; villagers do not necessarily look at a series of pictures from left to right, or assume that there is any connection between the pictures in a series; pictures that try to convey ideas or instructions often use symbols which are not understood by villagers; villagers are interested and attracted by pictures, even though they may need help to interpret them; realistic pictures, with a minimum of background detail, are the easiest for them to understand; and pictures showing a lot of different objects are not well understood. (THC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

P-8A

Communicating with Pictures

ED257437

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

IR011 669

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N van Oudenhoven

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Reprinted by Peace Corps/Information Collection
& Exchange with the permission of UNICEF/Nepal.

Communicating with pictures

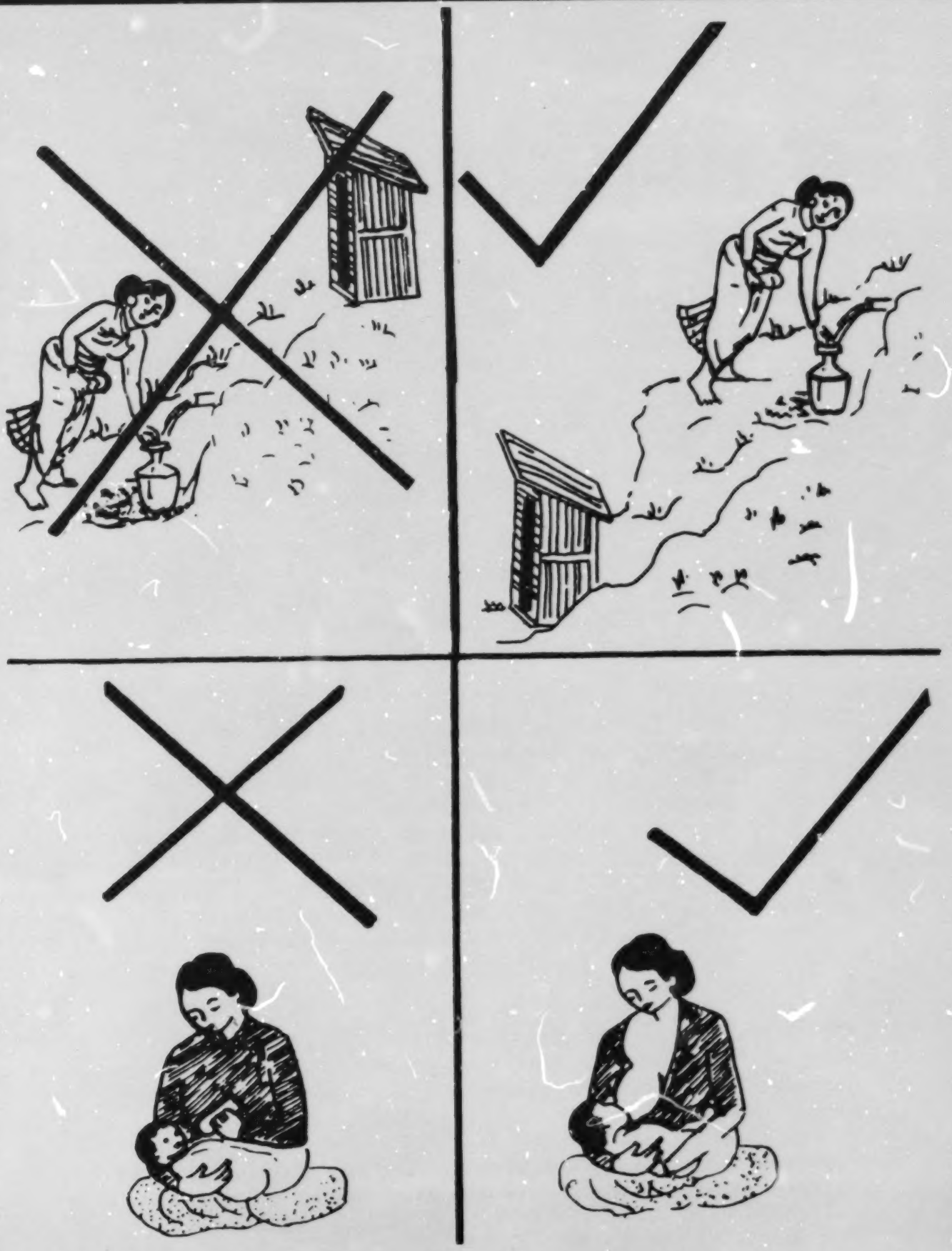
Most Nepalese villagers cannot read. So they naturally cannot understand booklets or other written material about village development.

- Is it possible to communicate ideas and information to villagers by using pictures only?
- What kinds of pictures are most meaningful for villagers?
- Do different colours have special meanings for villagers?

In early 1976, the National Development Service and UNICEF conducted a study designed to get answers to these questions. Teams of data-collectors went to nine different parts of the country: the mountains, hills and plains in the Far West, West/Centre, and East. They conducted interviews with over 400 adult villagers from the following groups: Thakuri, Brahmin, Chhetri, Muslim, Bhote, Magar, Gurung, Maithili, Limbu, Rai and Tharu, showing them a wide variety of pictures and colours and noting their responses. None of the villagers interviewed had ever been to school.

The main findings of the study, and what they mean for National Development Service participants and other village development workers, are summarised in this booklet, which is also available in the Nepali language.

Copies of the full report of the study are obtainable from the National Development Service, Kirtipur Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal, and from UNICEF, P.O Box 1187, Kathmandu, Nepal.



Some of the pictures used in the study (see page 8)

Findings of the Study

Note: 1. In the following explanation, the term "villagers" is used to refer to the sort of villagers interviewed in the study, i.e. adult villagers who live away from the main towns and who have never been to school (which means most of the villagers in the country). Villagers who have been to school, or who have had other opportunities to look at many pictures, would probably find the pictures easier to understand than the villagers who were interviewed in the study.

2. The pictures used in the study measured approximately 17 cm. x 13 cm. - i.e. they were all bigger than they appear in this booklet.

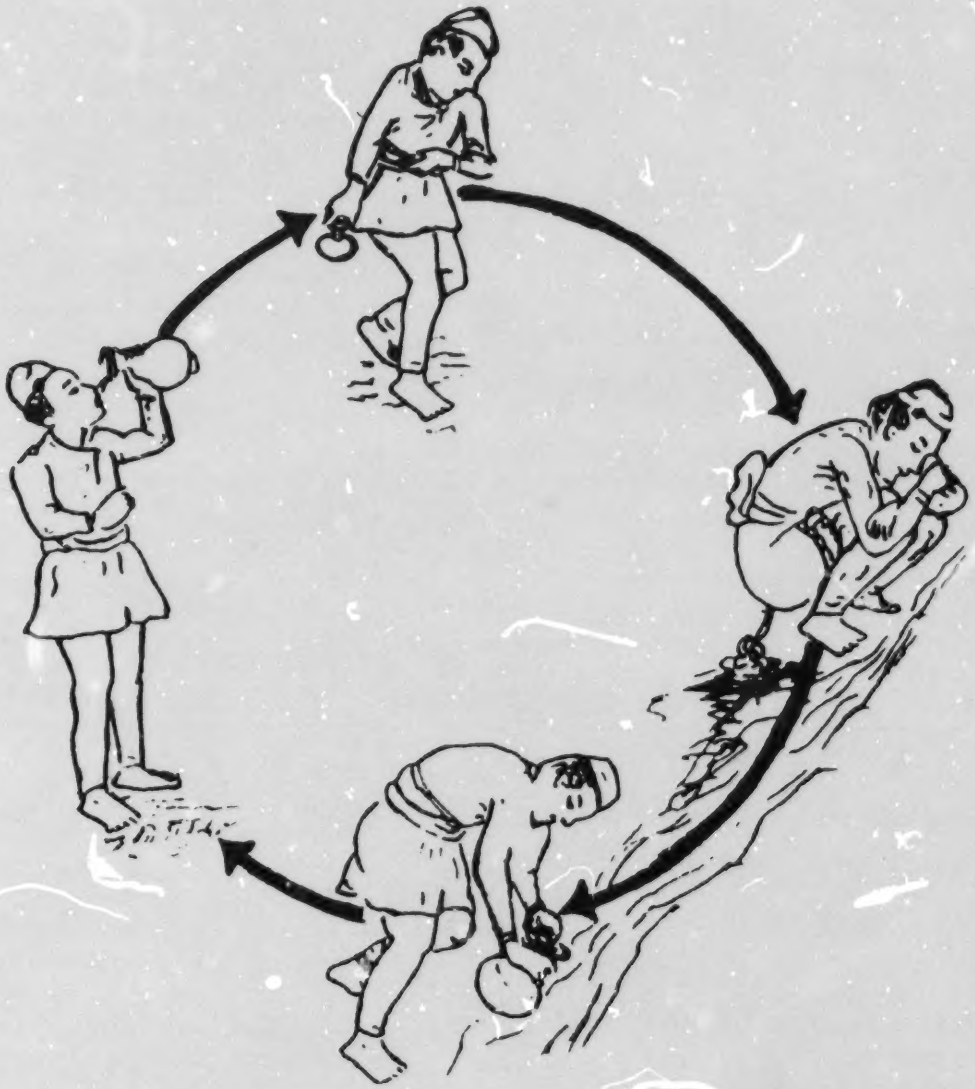
IS IT POSSIBLE TO COMMUNICATE IDEAS AND INFORMATION TO VILLAGERS BY USING PICTURES ONLY?

PROBABLY NOT

In the course of the study, over 20 pictures intended to convey ideas (rather than just to represent objects) were shown to villagers.

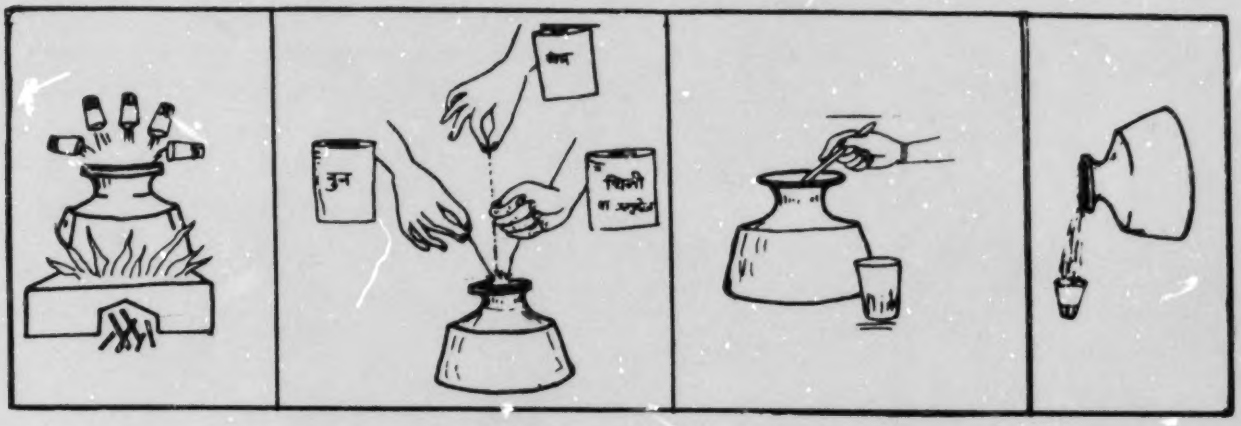
Many (but not all) of the villagers could recognise the objects shown in the pictures. But the ideas behind the pictures were almost never conveyed to the villagers.

For example, this picture was intended to convey the idea that people who drink polluted water are likely to get diarrhoea.



It was shown to 89 villagers, and only one of them understood the message behind the picture.

This series of pictures was intended tc show how to make rehydration mixture for the treatment of diarrhoea:



The interviewers told the villagers the meaning of the writing in the second picture (salt, baking soda, sugar), but the series was not comprehensible for any of the 89 villagers who saw it.

WHY PICTURES FAIL TO CONVEY IDEAS AND INFORMATION

1. Villagers who are not used to looking at pictures may find it difficult to see what objects are shown in the picture.

"Reading" pictures is easier than reading words, but people do not automatically know how to do it. People have to learn to "read" pictures.

In the final stage of the study, just one picture was taken from the series shown above.

It was shown to 410 villagers. Only 69 of them realised it was a picture of hands putting something into a pot. 99 others could see the hands but could not suggest what they might be doing. And the rest of the villagers (242 people) did not see the hands at all 82 of them thought it was a picture of flowers or a plant.

67 villagers were shown this picture, but only 33 of them saw that it was meant to be of a person digging. Many others thought it was a man with a gun, and others suggested it could be someone flying a kite.

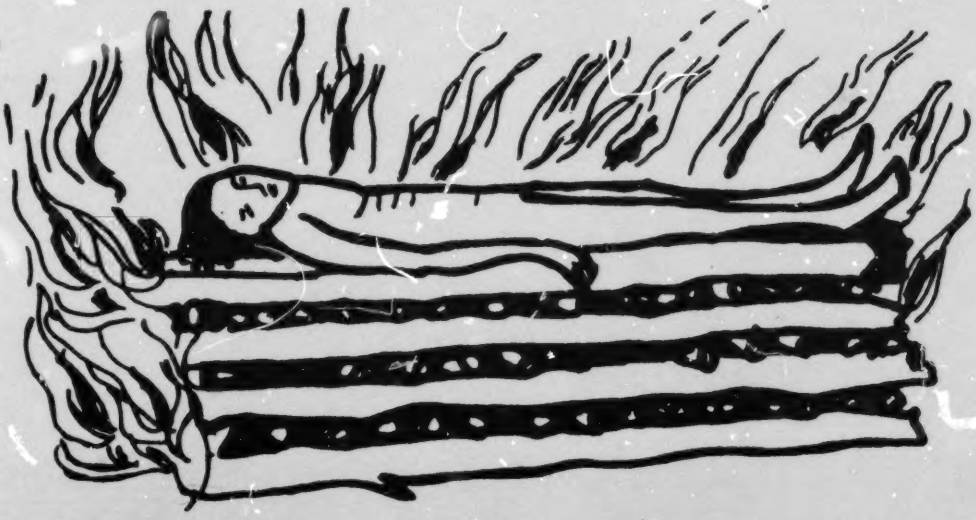
This picture is supposed to represent a pregnant woman, but about a quarter of the 410 villagers who saw it did not recognise it as a woman. 11% thought it was a man, and others thought other things such as a cow, a bird or a rabbit.

Villagers in the least-developed part of the country (the Far West) had the most difficulty in understanding the pictures, probably because they see fewer pictures than villagers in other parts of the country. For example, over 400 villagers were shown ten pictures of fairly common things (such as a horse, a woman, a water pot) On average, the villagers in the West/Central and Eastern areas recognised about seven of these ten pictures, but the villagers in the Far West recognised an average of about four of them.

2. Villagers do not expect to receive ideas from pictures

410 villagers were shown this picture. 99 of them realised it was meant to be a picture of someone drinking boiled (or heated) water. But even when the interviewers asked what the picture might be trying to teach, only 10 of these villagers suggested that "Drink boiled (or heated) water" might be the message. Many of the villagers were surprised at the suggestion that a picture could teach anything.

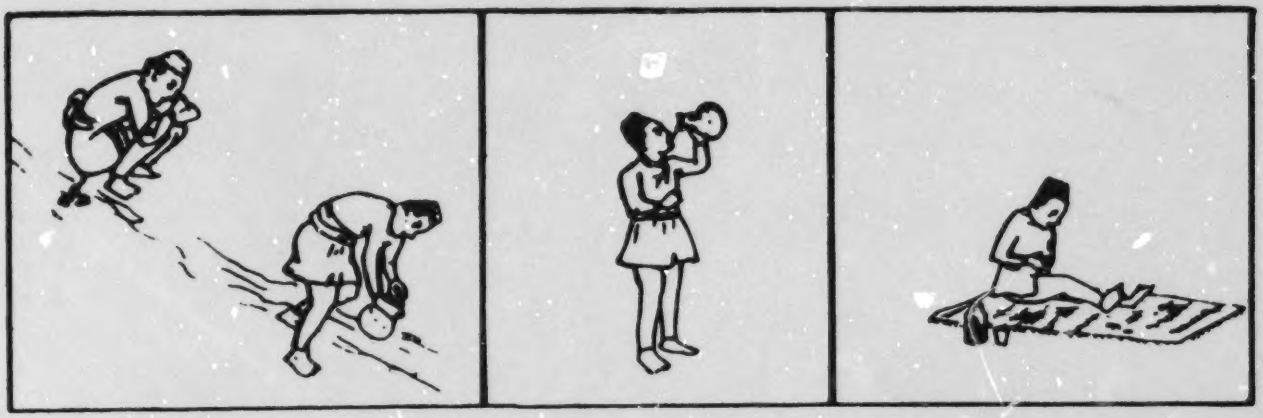
3. Villagers tend to "read" pictures very literally. That is, even if they recognise the objects or people represented in the picture, they may not attempt to see any link between the objects, or any meaning behind the picture.



This picture of a funeral pyre was meant to represent the idea of death. Some of the villagers said they could see a person lying on firewood, but they were not prepared to state that the person was dead, or to suggest any other explanation of what they could see.

4. Villagers do not necessarily look at a series of pictures from left to right, or assume that there is any connection between the pictures in a series.

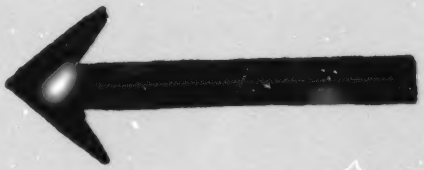
For the final stage of the study, an attempt was made to simplify the "diarrhoea cycle" picture on page 3, as follows:



Less than half of the 410 villagers looked at these pictures in order from left to right (37% of them looked at the middle picture first). Hardly any of the villagers appeared to think that the pictures were related to each other.

5. Pictures which try to convey ideas or instructions often use symbols which are not understood by villagers.

The arrow is a symbol very commonly used to indicate direction. (For example, it has been used in three of the drawings reproduced in this booklet so far.) But very few villagers think of an arrow as indicating direction.



These symbols are often used to mean "right" and "wrong", or "good" and "bad". But the villagers interviewed for this study, not having been to school, had not learned to understand these symbols.

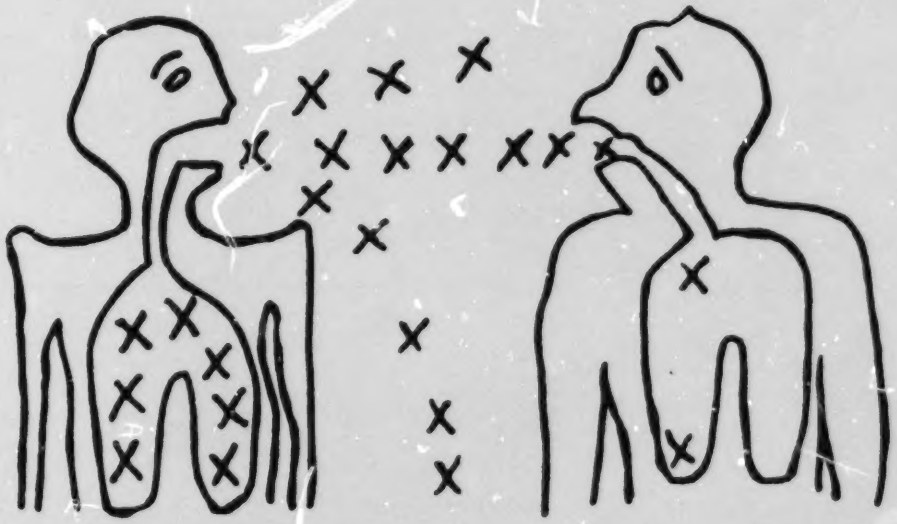
This sign is often used to represent danger. But only 4 out of the 410 villagers knew it was supposed to indicate danger. (However, over half of the villagers recognised it as a skull, or said it was a monster or ghost, or remarked that it gave them an unpleasant feeling.)

ARE PICTURES ANY USE THEN?

YES

People are interested and attracted by pictures, even though they may need help to interpret them.

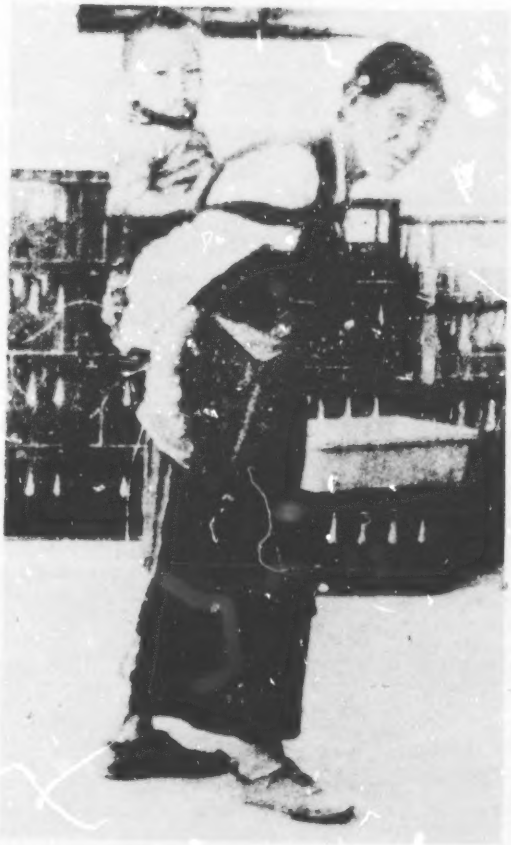
If a picture's message is explained to villagers, they will probably remember the message when they see the picture again.



For example, this is a picture used by the British-Nepal Medical Trust to illustrate the idea that TB can pass from the lungs of a sick person to the lungs of a healthy person.

During the study this picture was taken to six villages and shown to over 100 people. In five villages, none of the villagers who saw the picture could understand it. But in the sixth village, many villagers could explain exactly what the picture meant. They could understand it because five months before, some health workers had visited their village and talked about TB, and had shown them this picture.

1



2.

3.

4.

WHAT KIND OF PICTURES SHOULD BE USED ?

Realistic pictures, with a minimum of background detail, are the easiest to understand.

The NDS/UNICEF study tested ten pictures in six different styles:

Two styles of photograph:

1. Photo with background
2. Block-out (photo without background)

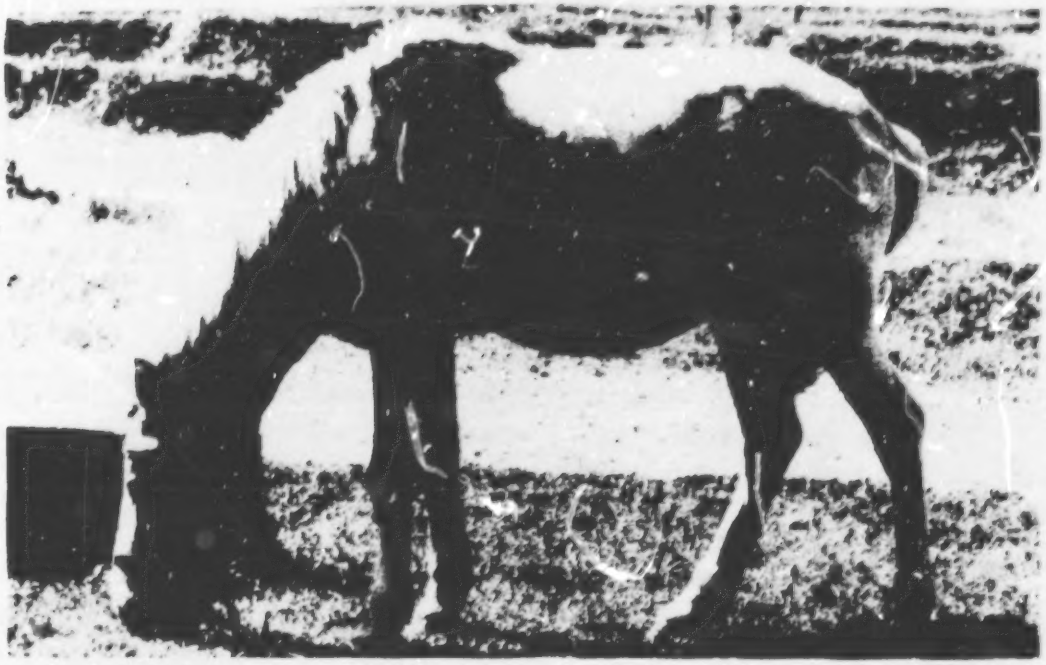
Four styles of drawing:

3. Shaded drawing
4. Line drawing
5. Silhouette
6. Stylized drawing

5.

6.

The block-outs were usually more effective than the photos.



For example, 67 villagers saw this photo, and 79% of them recognised it.

66 other people from the same villages saw this block-out, and 92% of them recognised it.

If results of all the ten pictures are taken together:

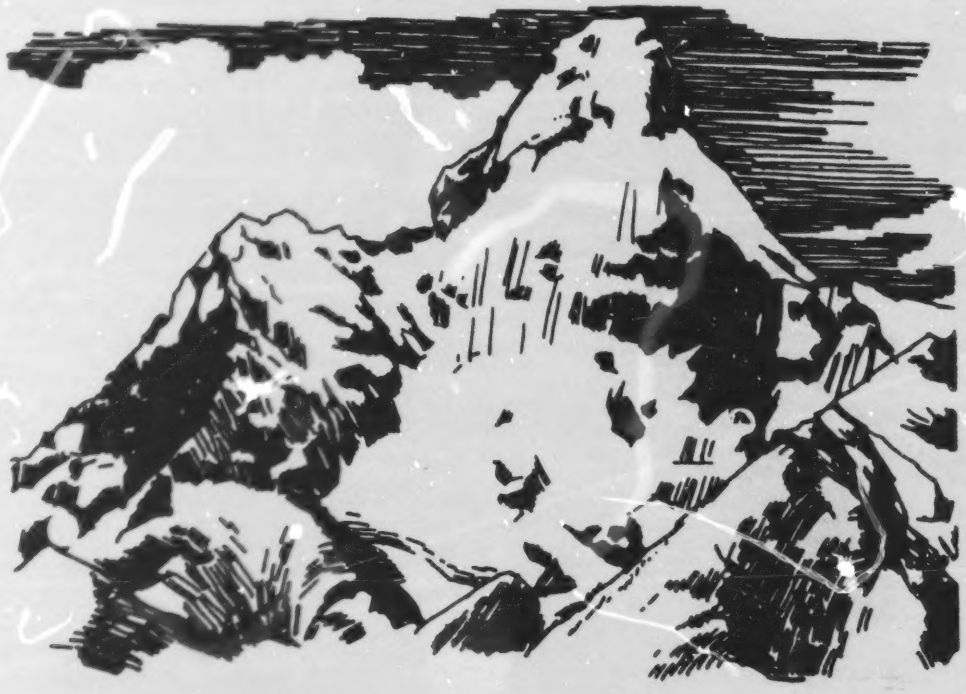
- block-outs were recognised by 67% of the villagers
- photographs were recognised by 59% of the villagers

The shaded drawing was the most effective style of drawing (in fact it was a little more effective than the block-out).

If results of all ten pictures are taken together:

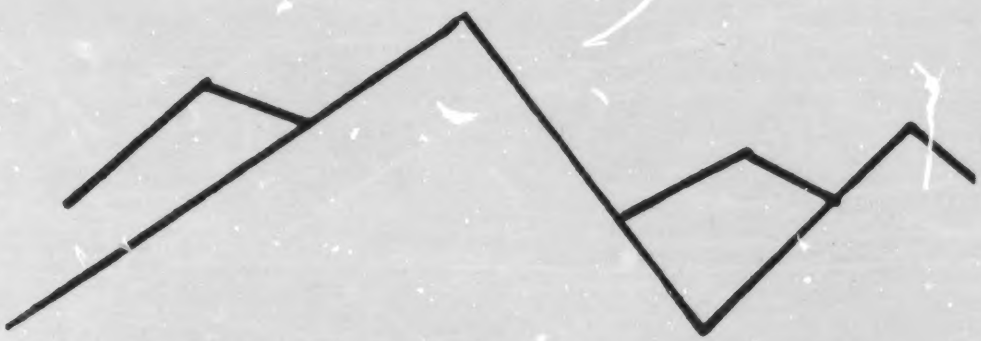
- shaded drawings were recognised by 72% of the villagers
- line drawings were recognised by 62%
- silhouettes were recognised by 61%
- stylized drawings were recognised by 49% of the villagers

Some examples:



66 villagers saw this shaded drawing of a mountain and 56% of them recognised it.

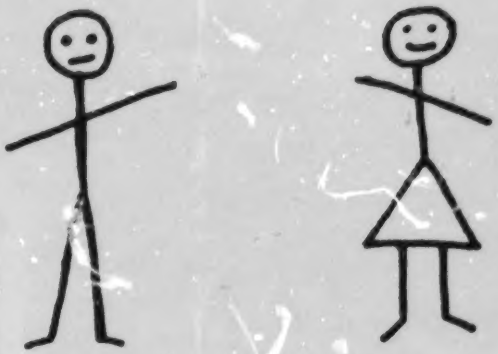
69 other villagers saw this line drawing and only 28% of them recognised it.



68 other villagers saw this stylized drawing and only 16% of them recognised it.

But some stylized drawings can be quite effective

For example, 410 villagers saw this drawing, and 65% of them realised it was meant to represent people.



68 villagers saw this picture, and 75% of them understood it was meant to be a water pot.

66% of the villagers interviewed recognised this as a drawing of a fish.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

410 villagers saw this drawing, and 59% recognised it as the sun. 14% said it was the moon.

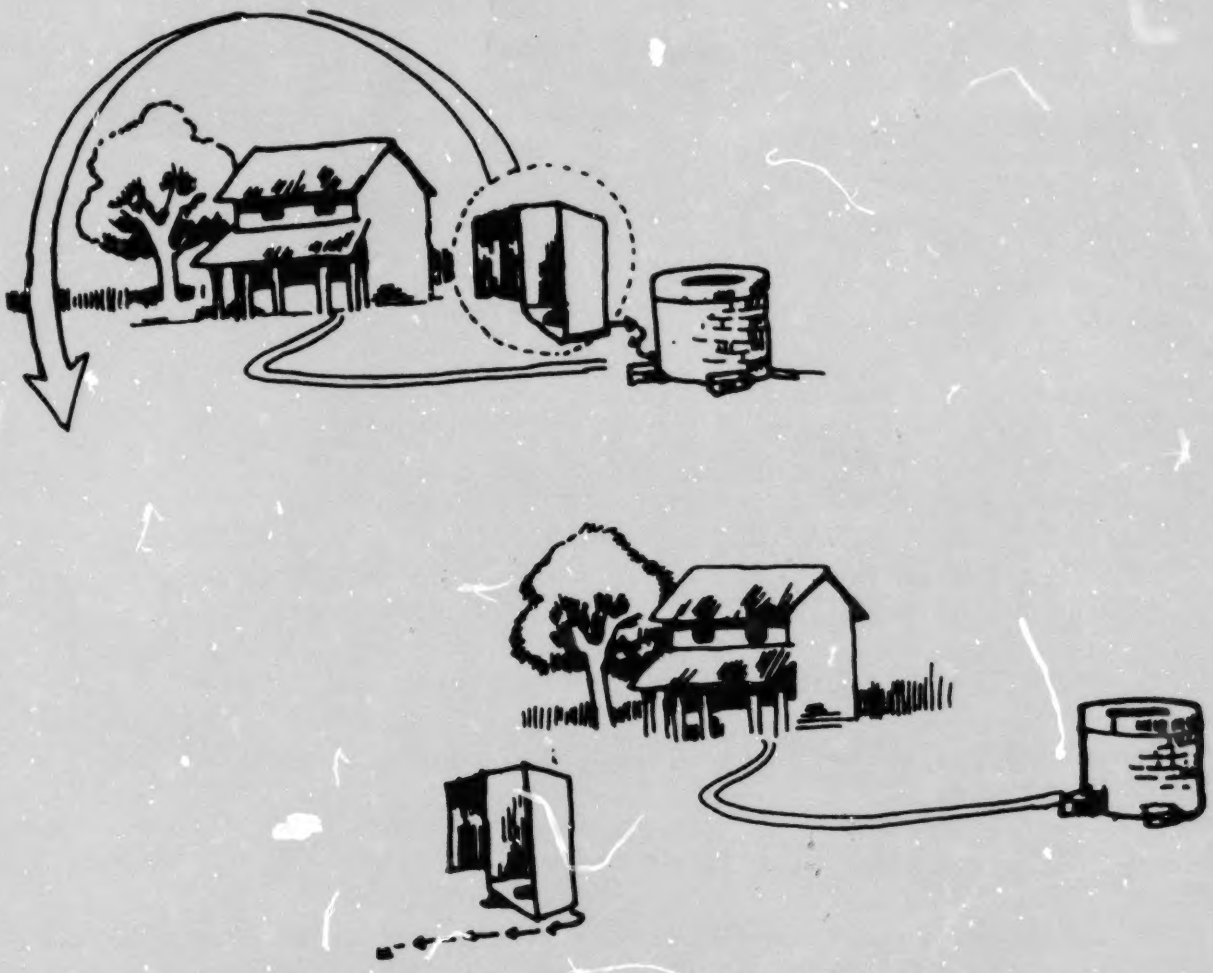
Even very simple drawings are recognised best if they are of things very familiar to village people

In areas where houses have sloping roofs, 85% of the villagers recognised this as a building.

But in areas where houses have flat roofs only 26% knew it was meant to be a building.

WHAT KIND OF PICTURES SHOULD BE AVOIDED ?

Pictures showing a lot of different objects are not well understood



89 villagers were asked what they could see in this picture. Only 53 of them recognised the houses, even though they are quite realistically drawn. Far fewer of the villagers mentioned any of the other objects in the picture.

Silhouettes are ofteh misinterpreted

People are inclined to think a picture like this is a black person, or a monster, or a devil or ghost.

WHAT ABOUT COLOURS ?

The villagers interviewed in the study liked bright colours, and thought of them as colours for happy occasions.

The most-liked colours were red, bright pink and purple.

Orange and yellow were well liked, and people thought of them as the colours for gods.

Blue and green were also liked, particularly in the Far West.

The villagers interviewed disliked black very much, and thought of it as the colour for devils. They also disliked brown and grey.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO ?

What should you do if you want to use pictures to help you communicate ideas to villagers as you carry out your village development work?

1. It is possible for you to make simple drawings yourself that will be quite effective - certainly more effective than just talking or writing. It is not necessary for you to use photographs, which are difficult and expensive to make.

2. The most effective drawings are shaded drawings with little or no background, like this one.

However, these are the most difficult to draw.

3. If you cannot make shaded drawings, or get someone else to make them for you, then try to make line drawings, like this

4. If these are still too difficult to make, then make stylized drawings, like this:

5. If you decide to use colours, choose colours which are appropriate to the ideas you are trying to communicate

bright colours are for happiness

orange and yellow are for gods

black, brown and grey produce negative reactions

If you colour your drawings, make things the colours they are in real life, or villagers will probably be confused.

6. Make your drawings of such things as houses, water pots, people, etc., as much as possible like the houses, water pots and people that villagers see every day, or they may not recognise them very easily.

7. Do not put too many objects in one drawing. Each drawing should contain only one or two objects, if possible. It is better to have many drawings with one or two objects in them than to try to put many things in one drawing.

8. Do not expect villagers to learn a lot from the drawings alone. Use drawings to capture the villagers' attention, to reinforce what you say, and to give them an image to remember, but always give a clear and full oral explanation of your subject in addition to showing the drawings.

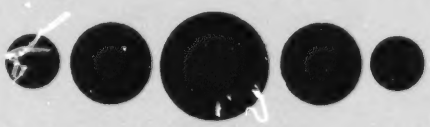
9. If you want to place drawings around the village to continually convey ideas to villagers (e.g. signs indicating "danger" or "poison", or reminders about family planning, or conservation and reforestation, or the need to boil drinking water) then remember it will be necessary to teach many villagers what the drawings mean. It is quite possible to do this teaching, e.g. by getting all children at the school to make copies of the drawings and take them home and teach their families what they mean. Unless many villagers are taught the

meaning of such drawings, the drawings are not likely to be effective, and may even have a negative effect if they are misinterpreted.

10. If you use a series of pictures to represent an idea or a set of instructions, be sure that the villagers see the relationship between the various pictures in the series (e.g. that the pictures all represent the same person at different stages of some action). Make sure also that the villagers know which order to "read" the pictures in.

11. Remember that villagers will be likely to interpret your drawings very literally, e.g. if you draw something larger than it is in real life (such as drawing a fly six inches high) people may assume you really mean it to be an impossibly enormous fly, or they may think it is a strange kind of bird.

12. If posters are sent to the village by one of HMG's Departments, e.g. the Agriculture Department, or the Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health Project, you can help by making sure the villagers understand the meaning of these posters.



TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

All students at the Degree level in Nepal are required to serve for one year with the National Development Service (NDS), living in rural areas, helping with village-level development work, before they are allowed to begin their final year of academic study.

NDS participants are assigned one, two or three to a village, and most work in villages in the Far Western and Western Development Regions, some of them in very remote villages.

They spend their NDS year both teaching in lower secondary or secondary schools and also undertaking a wide variety of general village-level development work, e.g. conservation and reforestation, family welfare work, literacy teaching, agricultural extension and simple construction work.

This booklet is based on a joint NDS/UNICEF study executed by:

Diana Fusell, UNICEF Consultant, NDS
Ane Haaland, UNICEF
Narendra Bhattarai, NDS
Shyam Rayamajhi, NDS
Tika Bhattarai, NDS
P.P.Kharel, NDS
Khagendra Dhungana, NDS
Chaitanya Subba, NDS

Copyright: UNICEF, 1975

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

UNICEF

A joint project